

Bhaja Govindam: The Hammer to Shatter Delusion

1. Introduction

Bhaja Govindam, also known as *Moha Mudgara*, is one of the most celebrated works of the 8th-century philosopher-saint **Adi Shankaracharya**.

The Origin: The composition was born in the holy city of **Varanasi**. Legend tells us that while walking with his disciples, Shankaracharya encountered an elderly scholar struggling to memorize the complex rules of Sanskrit grammar. Moved by the sight of someone nearing the end of life while still focused on intellectual technicalities rather than spiritual liberation, Shankara broke into song. This collection of 31 verses serves as a compassionate but firm wake-up call to look beyond the temporary and seek the eternal.

2. The 31 Verses

Verse 1

भजगोविन्दं भजगोविन्दं गोविन्दं भजमूढमते ।

सम्प्राप्ते सन्निहिते काले नहि नहि रक्षति डुकृञ्करणे ॥ १ ॥

Seek Govinda, seek Govinda, seek Govinda, O fool! When the appointed time of death arrives, the rules of grammar will not save you.

Verse 2

मूढ जहीहि धनागमत्तृष्णां कुरु सदबुद्धिं मनसि वितृष्णाम् ।

यल्लभसे निजकर्मोपातं वित्तं तेन विनोदय चित्तम् ॥ २ ॥

O fool, abandon the thirst for accumulating wealth. Cultivate thoughts of Reality and be free from desire. Be content with what you earn through your own honest labor.

Verse 3

नारीस्तनभरनाभीदेशं दृष्ट्वा मागामोहावेशम् ।

एतन्मांसवसादिविकारं मनसि विचिन्तय वारं वारम् ॥ ३ ॥

Do not be led astray by the physical beauty of a body. Remember always that it is merely a modification of flesh, fat, and bone. Discriminate between the appearance and the reality.

Verse 4

नलिनीदलगतजलअतितरलं तद्वज्जीवितमतिशयचपलम् ।

विद्धि व्याध्यभिमानग्रस्तं लोकं शोकहतं च समस्तम् ॥ ४ ॥

The water drop on the lotus leaf is extremely unsteady; even so is life, remarkably frail. Know that the entire world is consumed by disease and conceit, and is smitten with sorrow.

Verse 5

यावद्वित्तोपार्जनसक्तः तावन्निजपरिवारो रक्तः ।

पश्चाज्जीवति जर्जरदेहे वार्ता कोऽपि न पृच्छति गेहे ॥ ५ ॥

As long as one is fit to earn wealth, one's family is attached to him. But thereafter, when one lives in a frail, worn-out body, no one in the house even speaks a word to him.

Verse 6

यावत्पवनो निवसति देहे तावत्पृच्छति कुशलं गेहे ।

गतवति वायौ देहापाये भार्या बिभ्यति तस्मिन्काये ॥ ६ ॥

As long as the breath remains in the body, people at home inquire about one's welfare. Once the breath leaves and the body decays, even one's wife is afraid of that very body.

Verse 7

बालस्तावत्क्रीडासक्तस्तरुणस्तावत्तरुणीसक्तः ।

वृद्धस्तावच्चिन्तासक्तः परमे ब्रह्मणि कोऽपि न सक्तः ॥ ७ ॥

Childhood is lost in play; youth is lost in attachment to another; old age is lost in worrying over the past. Alas, how few are ever attached to the Supreme Brahman!

Verse 8

का ते कान्ता कस्ते पुत्रः संसारोऽयमतीव विचित्रः ।

कस्य त्वं कः कुत आयातः तत्त्वं चिन्तय तदिह भ्रातः ॥ ८ ॥

Who is your wife? Who is your son? Strange indeed is this world. Of whom are you? Who are you? From where have you come? Brother, ponder over these truths here.

Verse 9

सत्सङ्गत्वे निस्सङ्गत्वं निस्सङ्गत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।

निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्त्वं निश्चलतत्त्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥ ९ ॥

From the company of the good comes non-attachment; from non-attachment comes freedom from delusion; from freedom from delusion comes steadfastness; from steadfastness comes liberation in this life.

Verse 10

वयसि गते कः कामविकारः शुष्के नीरे कः कासारः ।

क्षीणे वित्ते कः परिवारो ज्ञाते तत्त्वे कः संसारः ॥ १० ॥

When youth is gone, where is the lustful play? When the water has dried up, where is the lake? When wealth is exhausted, where is the retinue? When the Truth is realized, where is the cycle of change?

Verse 11

मा कुरु धनजनयौवनगर्वं हरति निमेषात्कालः सर्वम् ।

मायामयमिदमखिलं हित्वा ब्रह्मपदं त्वं प्रविश विदित्वा ॥ ११ ॥

Do not boast of wealth, friends, or youth; Time takes them all away in a minute. Leave aside this entire world of illusion, and after knowing the Truth, enter into the state of Brahman.

Verse 12

दिनयामिन्यौ सायं प्रातः शिशिरवसन्तौ पुनरायातः ।

कालः क्रीडति गच्छत्यायुस्तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशावायुः ॥ १२ ॥

Day and night, dusk and dawn, winter and spring come and depart again. Time plays and life ebbs away, yet the wind of desire never leaves.

Verse 13

काते कान्ता धनगतचिन्ता वातुल किं तव नास्ति नियन्ता ।

त्रिजगति सज्जनसं गतिरैका भवति भवार्णवतरणे नौका ॥ १३ ॥

Why be distracted by thoughts of lust and wealth? Is there no one to guide you? In the three worlds, only the company of the wise acts as a boat to cross the ocean of existence.

Verse 14

जटिलो मुण्डी लुञ्छितकेशः काषायाम्बरबहुकृतवेषः ।

पश्यन्नपि च न पश्यति मूढो ह्युदरनिमित्तं बहुकृतवेषः ॥ १४ ॥

One has matted hair, another has a shaven head, another has hair plucked out; many disguise themselves in saffron robes. The fool sees but does not see—these disguises are adopted merely for the sake of the belly.

Verse 15

अङ्गं गलितं पलितं मुण्डं दशनविहीनं जातं तुण्डम् ।

वृद्धो याति गृहीत्वा दण्डं तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशापिण्डम् ॥ १५ ॥

The body has become decrepit, the head has turned grey, the mouth has become toothless. The old man moves leaning on a staff, yet he does not leave the bag of his desires.

Verse 16

अग्रे वह्निः पृष्ठे भानुः रात्रौ चुबुकसमर्पितजानुः ।

करतलभिक्षस्तरुतलवासः तदपि न मुञ्चत्याशापाशः ॥ १६ ॥

In front is the fire, behind is the sun; at night he tucks his knees into his chin. He begs with his palms and lives under a tree, yet the noose of desire does not leave him.

Verse 17

कुरुते गङ्गासागरगमनं व्रतपरिपालनमथवा दानम् ।

ज्ञानविहीनः सर्वमतेन भजति न मुक्तिं जन्मशतेन ॥ १७ ॥

One may go on a pilgrimage to where the Ganges meets the ocean, observe fasts, or give in charity; but without Knowledge, one does not attain liberation even in a hundred lifetimes.

Verse 18

सुरमन्दिरतरुमूलनिवासः शय्या भूतलमजिनं वासः ।

सर्वपरिग्रहभोगत्यागः कस्य सुखं न करोति विरागः ॥ १८ ॥

Living in temples or at the foot of trees, sleeping on the ground, wearing deer-skin; renouncing all possessions and comforts—to whom will such detachment not bring happiness?

Verse 19

योगरतो वा भोगरतो वा सङ्गरतो वा सङ्गविहीनः ।

यस्य ब्रह्मणि रमते चित्तं नन्दति नन्दति नन्दत्येव ॥ १९ ॥

Whether one is practicing yoga or indulging in enjoyment, whether one is in company or alone; he whose mind delights in Brahman, he enjoys, he enjoys, he truly enjoys.

Verse 20

भगवद्गीता किञ्चिदधीता गङ्गाजललवकणिका पीता ।

सकृदपि येन मुरारिसमर्चा क्रियते तस्य यमेन न चर्चा ॥ २० ॥

For him who has studied the Bhagavad Gita even a little, who has sipped at least a drop of Ganges water, and who has worshipped Murari at least once, there is no confrontation with the God of Death.

Verse 21

पुनरपि जननं पुनरपि मरणं पुनरपि जननीजठरे शयनम् ।

इह संसारे बहुदुस्तारे कृपयाऽपारे पाहि मुरारे ॥ २१ ॥

Birth again, death again, and again lying in the mother's womb—this world is indeed difficult to cross. Save me, O Murari, through your infinite mercy.

Verse 22

रथ्याचर्पटविरचितकन्थः पुण्यापुण्यविवर्जितपन्थः ।

योगी योगनियोजितचित्तो रमते बालोन्मत्तवदेव ॥ २२ ॥

The yogi who wears a garment made of rags, who walks the path beyond merit and demerit, and whose mind is joined in yoga, sports like a child or an intoxicated person.

Verse 23

कस्त्वं कोऽहं कुत आयातः का मे जननी को मे तातः ।

इति परिभावय सर्वमसारं विश्वं त्यक्त्वा स्वप्नविचारम् ॥ २३ ॥

Who are you? Who am I? From where have I come? Who is my mother, who is my father? Pondering thus, leave aside the entire world of dreams, realizing it is all essence-less.

Verse 24

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुर्व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।

भव समचितः सर्वत्र त्वं वाञ्छस्यचिराद्यदि विष्णुत्वम् ॥ २४ ॥

In you, in me, and everywhere else, there is but one Vishnu. You are unnecessarily angry with me, being impatient. Be equal-minded toward everything if you wish to attain the status of Vishnu soon.

Verse 25

शत्रौ मित्रे पुत्रे बन्धौ मा कुरु यत्नं विग्रहसन्धौ ।

सर्वस्मिन्नपि पश्यात्मानं सर्वत्रोत्सृज भेदाज्ञानम् ॥ २५ ॥

Do not waste your effort in making enemies or friends, or in seeking peace or war with relatives. See yourself in everyone and everywhere, giving up the ignorance of difference.

Verse 26

कामं क्रोधं लोभं मोहं त्यक्त्वाऽऽत्मानं भावय कोऽहम् ।

आत्मज्ञानविहीना मूढास्ते पच्यन्ते नरकनिगूढाः ॥ २६ ॥

Leaving aside lust, anger, greed, and delusion, contemplate on the Self: "Who am I?" Fools who are devoid of Self-knowledge are cooked in the hidden fires of hell.

Verse 27

गेयं गीतानामसहस्रं ध्येयं श्रीपतिरूपमजस्रम् ।

नेयं सज्जनसङ्गे चित्तं देयं दीनजनाय च वित्तम् ॥ २७ ॥

The Gita and the Sahasranama should be sung; the form of the Lord should be constantly meditated upon; the mind should be led to the company of the good; and wealth should be shared with the needy.

Verse 28

सुखतः क्रियते रामाभोगः पश्चाद्धन्त शरीरे रोगः ।

यद्यपि लोके मरणं शरणं तदपि न मुञ्चति पापाचरणम् ॥ २८ ॥

One indulges in physical pleasures with ease, but later there is disease in the body. Even though death is the ultimate refuge for everyone, man does not give up his sinful conduct.

Verse 29

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं नास्तिततः सुखलेशः सत्यम् ।

पुत्रादपि धनभाजां भीतिः सर्वत्रैषा विहिता रीतिः ॥ २९ ॥

Reflect always that wealth is a source of misfortune; in truth, there is not even a trace of happiness in it. For the rich, there is fear even of their own sons; this is the way of wealth everywhere.

Verse 30

प्राणायामं प्रत्याहारं नित्यानित्यविवेकविचारम् ।

जाप्यसमेतसमाधिविधानं कुर्ववधानं महदवधानम् ॥ ३० ॥

Regulate the breath, withdraw the senses, and discriminate between the eternal and the fleeting. Practice meditation along with the chanting of the holy name. Be careful—be very careful.

Verse 31

गुरुचरणाम्बुजनिर्भरभक्तः संसारादचिराद्भव मुक्तः ।

सेन्द्रियमानसनियमादेवं द्रक्ष्यसि निजहृदयस्थं देवम् ॥ ३१ ॥

Being a deep devotee of the lotus feet of the Guru, may you be released from the cycle of change soon. Through mastery of your senses and mind, you will see the Lord residing in your own heart.

3. Conclusion

The **Bhaja Govindam** is much more than a devotional hymn; it is a profound philosophical treatise condensed into simple, rhythmic verses. By addressing the universal human conditions of greed, attachment, and the fear of mortality, Adi Shankaracharya offers a path that combines the intensity of devotion with the clarity of wisdom. For the seeker, these 31 verses serve as a permanent reminder that while the world around us is in constant flux, the Divine within remains the only true anchor.

BHAJA GOVINDAM

Seek Govinda! Seek Govinda!

A Devotional Essay by Sri Adi Shankaracharya and His Disciples

INTRODUCTION

Bhaja Govindam, also known as Moha Mudgara ("The Hammer that Destroys Delusion") or Dvadashamanjarika Stotra, is one of the most celebrated devotional and philosophical compositions in the entire corpus of Sanskrit literature. It was composed by the great Advaita Vedanta master, Sri Adi Shankaracharya (788–820 CE), widely revered as Jagadguru — the Teacher of the Universe — along with contributions from his principal disciples, collectively known as the Chaturdasha Manya Shishyas (the fourteen venerable disciples). The text comprises 31 verses, of which the central 12 are ascribed directly to Shankaracharya himself, with the remaining verses contributed by his disciples, culminating in a triumphant whole.

The legend behind the composition is as instructive as the poem itself. Sri Shankaracharya, while walking through the sacred lanes of Kashi (Varanasi), came upon an elderly Brahmin scholar who was laboriously memorising the grammatical rules of Panini's Ashtadhyayi. Moved by deep compassion — for he saw in this image a symbol of universal human ignorance, of a man spending his last breaths on dry intellectual pursuits rather than seeking the Divine — Shankaracharya spontaneously uttered the immortal refrain: "Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam, Govindam Bhaja Moodhamathe!" — "Seek Govinda! Seek Govinda! Seek Govinda, O fool!" This inspired outburst became the seed of the entire composition. One by one, his disciples, each moved by the same fire of vairagya and devotion, added verses of their own, and the collective poem became a garland of wisdom.

Philosophically, Bhaja Govindam belongs to the tradition of Advaita Vedanta, the non-dualistic school of Hindu thought that Shankaracharya championed and systematised. Its central message is the impermanence of all worldly life — of youth, beauty, wealth, family, and bodily pleasures — and the urgent, compassionate call to turn the heart towards Govinda (Lord Vishnu/Krishna, here representing the Supreme Brahman itself). The poem weaves together vivid imagery of life's fleeting nature, sharp social observation, practical ethical instruction, and ultimately a soaring call to devotion (bhakti), dispassion (vairagya), and the company of the holy (satsanga). It remains, to this day, one of the most widely sung, recited, and cherished texts in the Hindu devotional tradition — a poem that has touched the hearts of kings and peasants, scholars and seekers, across more than twelve centuries.

THE SHLOKAS WITH TRANSLATIONS

~ Refrain (Dhruva Pada) ~

Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam,

Govindam Bhaja Moodhamathe;

Sampraapte Sannihite Kaale,

Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrinkarane.

Translation: Seek Govinda! Seek Govinda! Seek Govinda, O fool! When the appointed time of death arrives, the rules of grammar (Dukrinkarana) shall certainly not save you.

Shloka 1 (Shankaracharya)

Moodha Jaheehi Dhanagama Trishnam,

Kuru Sadbuddhim Manasi Vitrishnam;

Yallabhase Nijakarmopaattam,

Vittam Tena Vinodaya Chittam.

Translation: O fool, give up your mad thirst for accumulating wealth. Cultivate wisdom and contentment in your mind. Find joy and satisfaction in whatever you honestly earn through your own rightful efforts.

Shloka 2 (Shankaracharya)

Naareestanaabhara Naabheedesham,

Drishtvaa Maa Gaa Mohaavesham;

Etan Maamsavasaadi Vikaaaram,

Manasi Vichintaya Vaaram Vaaram.

Translation: Do not be seized by infatuation upon beholding the rounded bosom and navel of a woman. These are but transformations of flesh and fat. Reflect upon this truth again and again in your mind.

Shloka 3 (Shankaracharya)

Nalineedalagata Jalamatitaralam,

Tadvajjeevitamatisamachapalam;

Viddhi Vyaadhyabhimaana Graastam,

Lokam Shokahatam Cha Samastam.

Translation: Life is as fleeting and unsteady as a droplet of water trembling on a lotus leaf. Know that the entire world is consumed by disease and conceit, and afflicted by grief.

Shloka 4 (Shankaracharya)

**Yaavadvittoparjanashaktih,
Taavannijaparivaaro raktah;
Pashchaajjeevati Jarajjare,
Kopi Na Pricchati Gehe Tare.**

Translation: As long as you have the ability to earn wealth, so long does your family remain attached to you. Later, when you are enfeebled by old age, no one in the house even asks after your welfare.

Shloka 5 (Shankaracharya)

**Yaavat Pavano Nivasati Dehe,
Taavat Pricchati Kushalam Gehe;
Gatavati Vaayau Dehaapaaye,
Bhaarya Bibhyati Tasminkaaye.**

Translation: As long as there is breath in the body, so long do people at home inquire about your well-being. But when that vital breath departs and the body turns lifeless, even the wife recoils in fear from that very body.

Shloka 6 (Shankaracharya)

**Baalastaavatkreedaasakthah,
Tarunastaavattaraneesaktah;
Vridhastaaavadchintaasaktah,
Parame Brahmani Kopi Na Sakthah.**

Translation: In childhood one is engrossed in play; in youth one is attached to a young woman; in old age one is lost in anxious worry. But alas, in the Supreme Brahman, no one is truly absorbed at any stage of life.

Shloka 7 (Shankaracharya)

**Kaate Kaantaa Kaste Putraah,
Samsaaro'yam Ateeva Vichitrah;
Kasya Tvam Vaa Kuta Aaayaatah,
Tattvam Chintaya Tad Iha Bhraatah.**

Translation: Who is your wife? Who is your son? The world is truly a strange and wondrous entanglement. Whose are you? From where have you come? O brother, reflect deeply on these truths right here and now.

Shloka 8 (Shankaracharya)

**Satsangatve Nissangatvam,
Nissangatve Nirmohatvam;
Nirmohatve Nishchalatattvam,
Nishcalatattve Jeevanmuktih.**

Translation: From the company of the holy (satsang) arises freedom from attachment; from non-attachment arises freedom from delusion; from freedom from delusion arises the experience of the Immovable Truth; from that arises liberation even while living (jivanmukti).

Shloka 9 (Shankaracharya)

**Vayasigate Kah Kaamavikaara,
Shushke Neere Kah Kaasaara;
Ksheen Evitte Kah Parivaarah,
Gyaate Tattve Kah Samsaarah.**

Translation: When youth has passed, where is the passion and desire? When the water has dried up, what remains of the lake? When wealth has dwindled, where is the family? When the Truth is known, where is the cycle of birth and death (samsara)?

Shloka 10 (Shankaracharya)

**Maa Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam,
Harati Nimeshaat Kaalah Sarvam;
Maayaamayam Idamakhilam Hitvaa,
Brahmapadam Tvam Pravisha Veditva.**

Translation: Do not be proud of wealth, followers, or youth. Time snatches all these away in the twinkling of an eye. Knowing this entire world to be the sport of Maya (illusion), relinquish it and enter into the state of Brahman.

Shloka 11 (Shankaracharya)

**Dinayaaminyau Saayam Praatah,
Shishiravasantau Punaraayaatah;
Kaalah Kreedati Gachchhatyaayuh,
Tadapi Na Munchtyaashaavaayuh.**

Translation: Day and night, dusk and dawn, winter and spring come and go in endless succession. Time plays its game and life ebbs away — yet even so, the winds of desire and vain hope do not leave man.

Shloka 12 (Shankaracharya)

**Dvaadashmanjarikabhirasheshah,
Kathito Vaiyaakaranasyaisha;
Upadesho Bhoovadvidyaa,
Nipur Naadharmaradhita.**

Translation: This instruction has been set forth in these twelve verses for the grammarian. O man, this teaching is the essence of wisdom. Strive not for religious rites alone, but immerse yourself in the supreme knowledge.

Shloka 13 (Disciple Hastamalaka)

**Kaa Te Kaantaa Dhanagatachintaa,
Vaatula Kim Tava Naasti Niyantaa;
Trijagati Sajjanasamgatirekaa,
Bhavati Bhavaarnavatrane Nauka.**

Translation: Why this vain anxiety about wife and wealth, O distracted one? Is there no one to guide you? In all three worlds, the company of holy persons alone is the boat that carries one across the ocean of becoming.

Shloka 14 (*Disciple Sureshvara*)

***Jatilo Mundi Lunchitakeshaha,
Kaashaayaambara Bahukritaveshah;
Pashyannapi Cha Na Pashyati Moodho,
Hy Udara Nimittam Bahukrita Vesho.***

Translation: The fool who has matted hair, a shaved head, or plucked hair, who is clad in an ochre robe, though he puts on many disguises — he sees not, for all these disguises are merely for the sake of filling his belly.

Shloka 15 (*Disciple Totataka*)

***Angam Galitam Palitam Mundam,
Dashana Viheena Charvita Tundam;
Vriddho Yaati Griheetvaa Dandam,
Tadapi Na Munchtyaashaapindam.***

Translation: The limbs have grown feeble, the hair has turned grey, the mouth toothless and sunken — the old man walks leaning on a staff — and yet the lump of desires has not left him.

Shloka 16 (*Disciple Padmapadacharya*)

***Agre Vahnih Prushthe Bhaanuh,
Ratrau Chubuka Samarpita Jaanuh;
Yadapi Dehe Dehe Sarve,
Tadapi Na Munchatyaashaapaasham.***

Translation: Before him is fire for warmth, behind him is the sun; at night he draws his knees up to his chin. Though he lives in such penury, with barely a body to call his own, yet he does not release the noose of desire.

Shloka 17 (*Disciple Anandagiri*)

***Kurute Gangaasaagaraganam,
Vrataparipaalana Madhavadanam;
Juktam Tadapi Na Muktim Dadaati,
Jnaanaviheena Sarvamatena.***

Translation: One may count pilgrimages to the Ganga and the sea; one may meticulously observe vows and fasts. Without knowledge of the Self, liberation cannot come by any path, say all the scriptures.

Shloka 18 (*Disciple Nityanananda*)

***Sura Mandira Taru Moola Nivaasah,
Shayya Bhoomir Ajina Vaasaah;
Sarva Parigraha Bhoga Tyaagah,
Kasya Sukham Na Karoti Viraagah.***

Translation: Dwelling in a temple or at the foot of a tree, sleeping on the bare earth, wearing a deerskin, renouncing all possessions and pleasures — to whom does dispassion (vairagya) not bring happiness?

Shloka 19 (*Disciple Medhartirtha*)

**Yogarato Vaa Bhogarato Vaa,
Sangarato Vaa Sangaviheenah;
Yasya Brahmanisthaa Matirlagna,
Tamasya Sukham Na Karoti Viraagah.**

Translation: Whether one is immersed in yoga or in pleasure, whether one lives in society or in solitude — he whose mind is rooted in Brahman abides in bliss. To him alone does liberation bring its highest joy.

Shloka 20 (*Disciple Unmattananda*)

**Bhagavat Geetha Kinchid Adheetaa,
Gangaa Jalalavalkanikaa Peetaa;
Sakridapi Yena Muraarivakram,
Bhavati Tasya Yamo Na Kinkara.**

Translation: He who has studied the Bhagavad Gita even a little, who has drunk even a sip of the water of the Ganga, who has worshipped even once Murari (Lord Krishna) — death, Yama, holds no power over that person.

Shloka 21 (*Disciple Nityananda (II)*)

**Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam,
Punarapi Jananee Jathare Shayanam;
Iha Samsaare Bahudustaare,
Kripayaa Paarepahi Muraare.**

Translation: Birth again, death again, rest again in the mother's womb — this cycle of samsara is vast and hard to cross. O Murari (Krishna)! In Thy mercy, carry me across to the other shore!

Shloka 22 (*Disciple Sumedha*)

**Rathyaa Charpatak Virachita Kanthah,
Punyaapunyavivarjita Panthah;
Yogee Yoganiyojita Chittah,
Ramate Baalonmattavat.**

Translation: He who wears a garment stitched of rags gathered from the road, who walks the path beyond merit and demerit, whose mind is united with the Absolute through yoga — such a yogi roams in bliss like a child or a madman.

Shloka 23 (*Disciple Medhasamudra*)

**Kastvamasmi Kuto Jatah,
Kaa Me Janani Ko Me Taatah;
Iti Paribhaavanasarvasar,
Brahmapad Tvam Pravisha Veditva.**

Translation: Who am I? From where have I come? Who is my mother? Who is my father? Ponder deeply upon the essence of all this, and having realised the Truth, enter into the supreme state of Brahman.

Shloka 24 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Tvayikaayi Sarvadaa Bhaktir,
Jadathaa Dehi Mukti;
Ishvare Sarvadaa Bhaktir,
Eko Vai Mukteh Karanah.***

Translation: Devotion to Thee, O Lord, at all times — and through such constant devotion, grant liberation. Devotion to the Lord, and to the Lord alone, is the one and only cause of liberation.

Shloka 25 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrinkarane,
Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam;
Sukha Dukhey Same Kritva,
Laabha Alabhau Jaya Ajayau.***

Translation: Truly, truly, the rules of grammar shall not save you at the time of death. Seek Govinda, seek Govinda! Treat pleasure and pain alike; be indifferent to gain and loss, victory and defeat.

Shloka 26 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Tvamaparitaa Kaantataam,
Dehi Prabho Vittam;
Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam,
Bhavasampraapte Sannihite Kale.***

Translation: O Lord, grant us renunciation of all that is impermanent. Seek Govinda, seek Govinda! When the hour of death draws near, no earthly thing — neither grammar, nor wealth, nor kinship — can protect you.

Shloka 27 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Geeta Dhyaana Saraamrtam,
Upanishad Gaavah Dohita Gopalah;
Paartho Vatsah Sudheer Bhoktaa,
Dugdham Gitaamrtam Mahat.***

Translation: The Bhagavad Gita is the nectar of the Upanishads; the Upanishads are the cows, and Sri Krishna the cowherd who milks them. Arjuna is the calf, and the wise man is the drinker of the great nectar of the Gita.

Shloka 28 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Kastvam Kosi Kutahpraaptah,
Kaa Me Jaananee Ko Vai Taatah;
Iti Paribhaavanasarvasar,
Brahmapadamtva Pravisha Veditva.***

Translation: Who are you? Who am I? From where have I come? Who is my mother, who my father? Ponder thus upon the essence of all existence, and realising the Truth, enter into the supreme state of Brahman.

Shloka 29 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Nalineedalagata Jalamatitaralam,
Tadvajjeevitamatisamachapalam;
Bhaja Govindam Bhaja Govindam,
Govindam Bhajamoodhamathe.***

Translation: Life is as fleeting as a drop of water on a lotus leaf. Therefore, seek Govinda, seek Govinda, seek Govinda, O fool! Devote yourself to God before time and opportunity are lost forever.

Shloka 30 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Yadyaatkarmaacharati Taadik,
Viddhyaarogyanishchayam Sarvam;
Nikhilam Bhaktisaaraamshu,
Sarvasaatsampaaditam.***

Translation: Whatever deed man performs in this life, know for certain that it will lead to health or affliction. All that is needed is the essence of devotion — through it, everything is truly accomplished.

Shloka 31 (*Shankaracharya*)

***Gurucharaana Ambuja Nirbhara Bhaktah,
Samsaarat Aciraad Bhava Muktah;
Sendriyamanasa Niyamaad Evam,
Drakshyasi Nijahridayastham Devam.***

Translation: He who is deeply devoted to the lotus feet of the Guru will swiftly be liberated from the bondage of worldly existence. Through discipline of the senses and the mind, you shall behold the Lord dwelling in your own heart.

CONCLUSION

Bhaja Govindam stands as a timeless masterpiece precisely because its message transcends the boundaries of era, language, and culture. At its heart, it is a poem of urgency and mercy — urgency, because human life is brief and the hour of death is certain; mercy, because the way to liberation is shown clearly: turn to Govinda, seek the company of the wise, cultivate dispassion, and know the Self. Shankaracharya, despite being the greatest logician and philosopher of the Hindu tradition, here speaks not from the intellect but from the depths of his compassionate heart. He does not argue; he implores.

The contribution of the disciples is equally significant. Each verse they added enriches the poem with a slightly different emphasis — the futility of false renunciation, the power of devotion, the glory of satsang, the liberation that comes from knowledge of the Self. Together, the verses form a complete map of the spiritual life: from the recognition of samsara's suffering, through detachment and devotion, to the final experience of the

Absolute. The poem is thus not merely a lament about the world's impermanence but a roadmap out of it.

The refrain — Bhaja Govindam — which punctuates the poem like a bell, is its soul. It is at once a warning, a consolation, and an invitation. "Whatever else you do," it says, "do not forget God." In a world where human beings remain as easily distracted, as attached, and as forgetful of their true nature today as they were in the eighth century, the words of Adi Shankaracharya ring with undiminished power. Bhaja Govindam is not merely a historical document; it is a living call — as fresh and urgent now as the moment it was first sung on the ghats of Kashi. Let the seeker heed it well.

~ Om Tat Sat ~

Sri Adi Shankaracharya and His Disciples

Ref: Wikipedia

Bhaja Govindam

"Bhaja Govindam" ([Sanskrit](#): भज गोविन्दम्, [lit.](#) 'praise/seek [Govinda](#)')^[1], also known as "Moha Mudgara" (lit. 'destroyer of [illusion](#)'), is a popular [Hindu](#) devotional poem in Sanskrit composed by [Adi Shankara](#). It underscores the view that [bhakti](#) (devotion) is also important along with [jñāna](#) (knowledge), as emphasised by the [bhakti movement](#).^[2]

Legend

There is a legend related to the composition of this hymn. It is said that Adi Shankaracharya, accompanied by his disciples, was walking along a street in [Varanasi](#) one day, when he came across an old aged scholar reciting the rules of Sanskrit grammar of [Panini](#) repeatedly on the street. Taking pity on him, Adi Shankara went up to the scholar and advised him not to waste his time on grammar at his age, but to turn his mind to God in worship and adoration, which would only save him from this vicious cycle of life and death. The hymn "Bhaja Govindam" is said to have been composed on this occasion.^[3]

Significance

This composition is a reminder that Adi Shankara, who is often regarded as reviver of the [jnana marga](#), or "path of knowledge", to attain [moksha](#), was also a proponent of the [bhakti marga](#) (path of devotion) to attain the same goal.^[4] As [C. Rajagopalachari](#) put in his commentary, "When intelligence (jnana) matures and lodges securely in the heart, it becomes wisdom (vignyana). When that wisdom (vignyana) is integrated with life and issues out in action, it becomes devotion (bhakti). Knowledge (jnana) which has become mature is spoken of as devotion (bhakti). If it does not get transformed into devotion (bhakti), such knowledge (jnana) is useless tinsel."^[5]

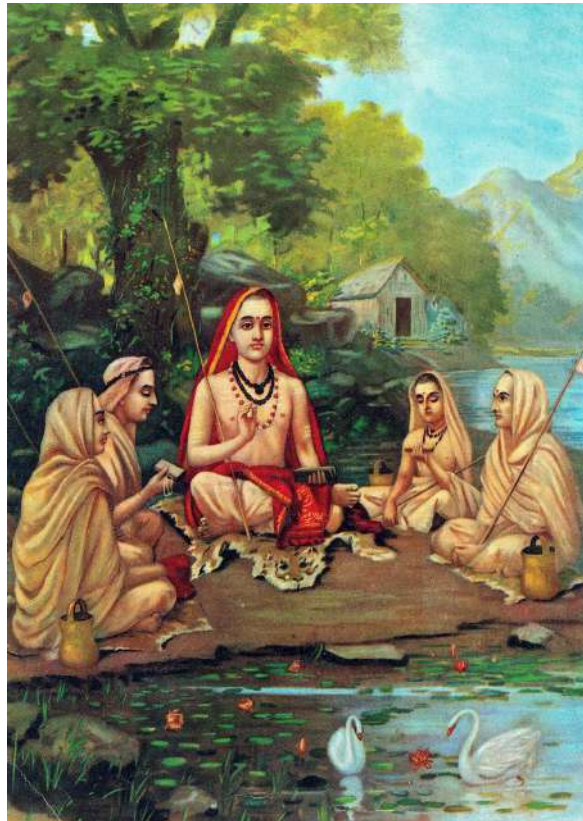
In this prayer, Adi Shankara emphasizes the importance of devotion for God as a means to spiritual development and to liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The prayer leaves one in no doubt that the renunciation of our egotistical differences and surrender to God makes for salvation. Many scholars hold that this composition encapsulates with both brevity and simplicity the substance of all [Vedantic](#) thought found in whatever other works that Adi Shankara wrote:

"The refrain *"Bhaja Govindam"*, which defines the composition and gives it its name, invokes the almighty in the aspect of [Krishna](#); it is therefore very popular not only with Sri Adi Shankaracharya's immediate followers, the [Smarthas](#), but also with [Vaishnavas](#) and others."

Meter / [Chhandas](#)

The core of the composition is in a moraic metre ([मात्राछन्दसः](#)). Scholars on the Indology list confirm it is mātṛāsamaka ([मात्रासमक](#)), where each line is structured by syllabic instants (mātrās) rather than a fixed number of syllables i.e [anushtubh](#) etc. Apart from the first verse, all other verses have 16 [matras](#), which tend to fit the description of the padakulakam ([पादकुलकम्](#)), a variety of matrasamaka [[मात्रासमक](#)] in [vṛtta-ratnakara](#).

Photo



[Adi Shankara](#) with his disciples, painting by Raja Ravi Varma

Videos

Bhaja Govindam...by M S Subbulaksmi (11 min):

https://youtu.be/Go-mAJpH6_w?si=CI7JzEC2jyVaX_f2

Bhaja Govindam by Anuradha Paudwal (6 min):

<https://youtu.be/U4LpJRkYsus?si=SBvuHi6XAkFVnO41>

Bhaja Govindam Yuga Singun and Ashwin Trivedi (12 min):

<https://youtu.be/QpB1GMltVf8?si=1m75KGe4FSDAV2tx>

Bhaja Govindam (10 min):

<https://youtu.be/t1TLv7VSg3Q?si=Z-yBV7LOy05-2uRJ>

Bhaja Govindam...lyrics and meaning (9 min):

<https://youtu.be/zQk-B2mHO0k?si=5FytwuVGawEWhH-Q>

Bhaja Govindam (58 min):

https://youtu.be/dRHQ4v1-zcw?si=n24_siLe0_ku1auL

Note: At the end of this ebook, two pages are included, giving (i) Author info, and (ii) a master link and QR code to download all my Technical (viz. Thermodynamics, Heat Transfer, and Cryogenic Engineering) ebooks plus Spiritual ebooks, stored in archive.org.

About the Author

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Dr. M. Thirumaleshwar
May 2, 2026
